

Lesson 9: The Bill of Rights and Individual Freedom

Teacher Version

Essential Question

Why did many Americans believe the Constitution needed a Bill of Rights?

Lesson Bridge

Review Lesson 8:

- Representative Government
- “A republic, madam—if you can keep it”

Bridge Question:

- Why might citizens worry about giving too much power to a government?

Hook Question

Should a government always have limits on its power? Why or why not?

Key Vocabulary

Introduce and clarify the following terms:

- Bill of Rights
- Natural Rights
- Tyranny
- Ratify
- Anti-Federalists

Reading and Text Coding

B = Bill of Rights

C = Concerns about government power

I = Important Information

- Teacher Modeling—I Do
- Guided Practice—We Do
- Independent Practice—You Do

Directed Note-Taking Graphic Organizer

Concern	Evidence (paragraph #)	What this shows about why Americans demanded a Bill of Rights
Fear of government power		
Protecting freedom of speech and religion		
Preventing tyranny		
Protecting fair treatment under the law		

Video Segment (10 minutes)

Video: [Thomas Jefferson](#)

Teacher Prompt: “We just read about why many Americans demanded stronger protections for individual rights. Now we are going to meet one of our most important Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was not at the Constitutional Convention and did not directly write the Bill of Rights. However, he strongly believed that governments exist to protect people’s natural rights. As you listen to Jefferson’s biography and watch the video, think about what Jefferson believed about liberty, rights, and government power.”

Note: The Jefferson video is not a direct explanation of the Bill of Rights. Its purpose is to introduce students to Jefferson as a person—his ideas about natural rights, liberty, and the role of government.

Video Segment (10 minutes)...cont'd

- ***Students complete Handout #4 while watching.***
- ***Teacher prompts (after video):***
 - “What did Jefferson believe about natural rights?”
 - “Why would someone with Jefferson’s beliefs want limits on government power?”
 - “Based on what you know about Jefferson, do you think he would have supported the Bill of Rights?”

Interpretive Discussion

- ***Teacher Prompt:*** “Why would Americans who had just fought a revolution worry about government power?”
- ***Students discuss:***
 - What rights did people want protected?
 - Why might people fear a government becoming too powerful?
 - Can a government protect freedom while still having power?
 - Why would some Americans refuse to support the Constitution without a Bill of Rights?

Interpretive Discussion...cont'd

- ***Teacher Prompt (after students talk):*** “Many Americans believed freedom could only survive if government power had clear limits.”

Debate: Why Did Americans Demand a Bill of Rights? (10-12 minutes)

Concerns Americans Had:

Fear of government power

Protecting freedom of speech and religion

Preventing tyranny

Protecting fair treatment under the law

Debate: Why Did Americans Demand a Bill of Rights? (10-12 minutes)...cont'd

The Debate Question

Which concern best explains why many Americans demanded a Bill of Rights?

Debate Directions

Choose one concern and explain how it best supports the argument for a Bill of Rights. Use at least one piece of evidence from the text or video.

Final Writing Prompt

Revolutionary Writers Essay: Thomas Jefferson

*Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence.
Do you think Thomas Jefferson would have supported adding a Bill of Rights to the Constitution?*

Explain your answer using details from the text and the video.

Students should write a paragraph that:

- states a clear position
- explains Jefferson's beliefs about natural rights
- explains why Americans wanted limits on government power
- connects Jefferson's ideas to the Bill of Rights

Final Writing Prompt...cont'd

Important: This essay is the primary assessment for Lesson 9 and also serves as one of nine potential student essays for the FIREWORKS250 Revolutionary Writers Essay Competition for students with teachers participating in cohort 2. Participating teachers should save all student essays. Students will select their best essay at the end of the year to submit for the competition.

Closure (5 minutes)

- **Teacher prompt:** “Today we learned that many Americans supported the Constitution but still worried about giving too much power to the government. We explored how the Bill of Rights was added to protect individual freedoms and limit government power. You also connected these ideas to Thomas Jefferson and his beliefs about natural rights and liberty. Throughout the lesson, you used evidence from the text, discussion, and video to explain why many Americans believed these protections were necessary.”
- **Turn-and-Talk:** “Which protection in the Bill of Rights do you think matters most today? Why?”
- **Exit Ticket:** “Why did Americans believe the Constitution needed a Bill of Rights?”